



Legislative update - April 25, 2012

Good day,

This week I'd like to highlight some of the measures approved by the Legislature during session that I expect will have the biggest impacts on our district.

This year we focused primarily on balancing the state's budget shortfall and rightly so. But there was other important legislation passed that may not have received as much publicity due to the attention given to the budget.

As I mentioned in my last e-newsletter, I'll be hosting town hall meetings next month in Stanwood, Skagit County, Langley and Oak Harbor. We're still nailing down the dates and specific locations, so I will include the details in next week's e-newsletter. I hope I'll see you at one of them!

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MAJOR BILLS FROM THE 2012 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Here are brief summaries of many of the more important measures passed by the Legislature this year:

THE CAPITAL BUDGET — [SB 6074](#) funds and maintains the construction of school buildings, parks, recreation areas and other educational, municipal and recreational infrastructure. In other words, much like the transportation budget, it's essentially a massive jobs bill that puts people to work and pumps money into local economies in communities across the state. The plan invests approximately

\$1 billion in economic development projects statewide and is projected to create 20,000 to 22,000 construction jobs and roughly 10,000 permanent private sector jobs.

MEDICAID FRAUD — [SB 5978](#) allows the state to receive a greater share of Medicaid fraud recovery funds and provides incentives and whistleblower protections to citizens, including employees, who witness and report fraud in the workplace.

TEACHER EVALUATIONS — [SB 5895](#) follows our ongoing state effort to move to a statewide four-tier teacher/principal evaluation system by 2015-16, once eight pilot programs have completed tests of what works best. Before 2010, teachers were given either a satisfactory or unsatisfactory grade under a two-tier system.

ANAEROBIC DIGESTERS — [SB 5343](#), a bill I sponsored, grants an extended compliance period to certain electric generating projects powered by gas from anaerobic digesters. To put it simply, this bill buys time for the industry to learn how to better control emissions from the digesters that turn agricultural manure into energy, helping process the vast amounts of waste from our dairy farms and providing an alternative energy source.

AEROSPACE RESEARCH AND EDUCATION — [SB 5982](#) creates the Joint Center for Aerospace Technology Innovation to pursue joint industry-university research that can be used by aerospace firms and enhance the education of engineering students.

AEROSPACE WORKFORCE TRAINING — [HB 2156](#) provides increased coordination and partnership to improve training quality and program accountability within aerospace-related educational program.

ELECTRONIC DOCUMENTS — [SB 6354](#) directs state agencies to provide businesses with the option of submitting documents, forms or fee payments electronically.

FINANCIAL AID COUNSELING — [SB 6121](#) requires Office of Student Financial Aid to create a model financial aid counseling curriculum so students can better understand their options when it comes to financing their education.

FOSTER CARE — [HB 2254](#) makes the Passport to College Promise program permanent and requires that foster children be automatically enrolled in the College Bound Scholarship program.

TRIAL COMPETENCY — [SB 6492](#) makes jail-based competency evaluations the default and provides bounded judicial discretion for hospital-based competency evaluations. Also adds performance targets for the state hospital and evaluators. This will eliminate a backlog of evaluations, increase efficiency, and reduce jail use for mental health purposes.

SUBSIDIZED CHILD CARE — [SB 6226](#) extends the Working Connections Child Care Authorization from six months to 12 months, increasing certainty for parents. Study indicates that parents in the 12-month period saw a positive impact on their child's development and saved the state hundreds of dollars per family.

COMMUNITY SUPERVISION — [SB 6204](#) overhauls the system to sanction offenders who violate the terms of their release. The swift and sure approach to punishment in this bill has been proven to reduce recidivism.

CHILD ABUSE — [SB 5991](#) extends mandatory reporting of child abuse and neglect to administrative,

athletic and academic personnel in institutions of higher education, including student employees. The bill prevents a Penn State-type scandal from happening here.

HOUSING ASSISTANCE SURCHARGE — [HB 2048](#) increases the Homeless Housing and Assistance Act document recording surcharge through June 30, 2017, to fund programs that are critical to the stability and health of children and families. On a given day, more than 23,000 people are homeless in Washington, about 16,200 are in temporary housing, and another 6,500 live in cars or in abandoned buildings or under bridges.

NEW FERRIES ON THE WAY AS OLDER FERRIES WEARING OUT

I was pleased to be able to provide funding in this year's supplementary transportation budget to build a second new 144-car ferry. Construction began on the first 144-car ferry last month. As I mentioned in a previous e-newsletter, I was thrilled to have the opportunity to make the ceremonial first weld on the new vessel after receiving some brief training along with Rep. Judy Clibborn, my legislative counterpart who chairs the House Transportation Committee. That's us in the photo, shortly before we put on the rest of our welding gear.



This first ferry is scheduled to start service in early 2014, the second in early 2015. The work on the vessels will employ more than 500 folks in family-wage jobs at shipyards throughout the region, including 100 jobs at Nichols Brothers Boat Builders on Whidbey Island. These ferries will replace the oldest ferries in the state fleet, and the need for them was underlined by reports recently that two of our oldest ferries — the Klahowya and the Tillikum — are encountering drive-motor problems.

Though these ferries have been able to maintain their sailing schedules despite having to run at reduced power due to their aging motor drives, they are clearly nearing the end of their life spans. The new ferries should come online in time to ensure smooth, continued service.

WE ARE HAPPY TO HELP YOU DURING THE LEGISLATIVE INTERIM

As always, if you have a concern, I want to hear it. The best ways to reach me during the legislative interim are by [email](#) or at my Olympia office at **360-786-7618** staffed by Legislative Assistant Nova Gattman or at my local Oak Harbor office at **360-682-6274** which is staffed during the legislative interim by Legislative Assistant Gina Bull.

